

Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion – SEDEP



Cooperatives and clusters

How a women's group wants to modernize livestock farming and the dairy industry in Northern Afghanistan

Uncoordinated key sector

Why wheat farmers sow prematurely or harvest too late and, in this way, pose a challenge for the still young association of female bakers

Overcoming social barriers

How successful female entrepreneurs support their young female colleagues in mastering traditional areas of tension

Dear readers,



Every year 500,000 young Afghans enter the labour market and want to secure a future life free of poverty and conflict. These young people want to be trained and need to be given an opportunity to earn a living. As part of its civil commitment, the German government supports the reform course embarked upon by the Afghan government. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Afghan Ministry of Finance therefore agreed to ensure the long-term preservation of accomplished project measures and give special priority to the employment of young women and men in urban and rural areas, especially in the agricultural sector. This support not only applies to large-scale infrastructure projects in water, roads and energy, but also to projects such as the “Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion” (SEDEP) programme. SEDEP aims at promoting agricultural value chains. For this purpose, smallholder farmers operating subsistence farming are increasingly integrated into food production systems while small business owners are supported in their product marketing.

The following brochure gives an insight into six years of project work and shows you its achievements.

Helmut Fischer
BMZ, Head of Division Central Asia, Afghanistan
and Pakistan



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The Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) has been implementing SEDEP on behalf of BMZ since 2014 in six provinces of Northern Afghanistan. In addition to promoting agricultural value chains, SEDEP is also trying to rehabilitate irrigation canals, mills and storage facilities. The engineers at GIZ are responsible for these activities and are doing their part to improve food security in the country. Read in the cover story how SEDEP creates more value by leading to an increase in jobs, especially for young Afghans. Continue to learn about business models and methods that enable women to generate more income and provide the population with access to additional and better products. This way their everyday life has improved and relaxed a little bit. Nevertheless, the subject of “gender equality” remains tense. Afghanistan’s women struggle with challenges on a daily basis. Traditionally, many women only move in public when accompanied by men, and conversations with men who do not belong to the family are prohibited. Can women become successful entrepreneurs in this environment? How SEDEP managed to enable access to new resources – this magazine will also give you interesting insights into this question.

I wish you an inspiring read,

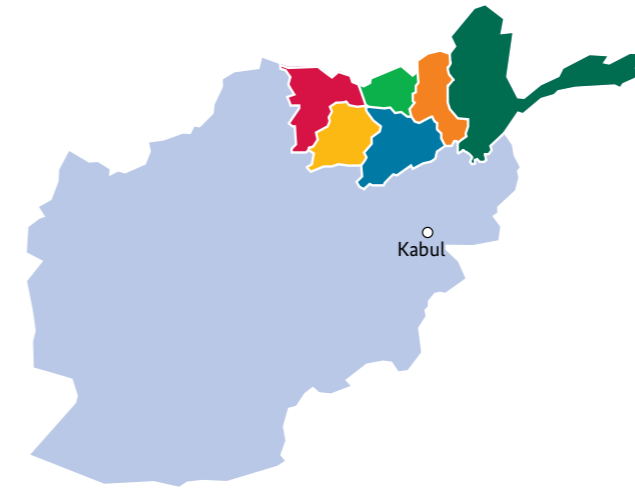
Robert Glaß
GIZ Project Manager

06

80 per cent of Afghans work in agriculture and generate almost one third of the country's GDP.

CREATING ADDITIONAL VALUE

Five agricultural value chains boost income and employment



18

COOPERATIVES AND CLUSTERS

A women's group modernises Northern Afghanistan's dairy industry

22

ON THE WAY TO CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

How carrots, cucumbers and cherries become marketable products

24

DOMESTIC PRODUCTS REPLACE IMPORTS

Solar energy ends competitive disadvantages in hatchery and chick rearing

27

EXPLOITING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

Standardized nut processing generates income at community level

30

UNCOORDINATED KEY SECTOR

Why wheat farmers harvest too late and how that creates challenges for female bakers

32

DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE – REMOVING BUSINESS

OBSTACLES On road tolls, traditions and water systems

34

OVERCOMING SOCIAL BARRIERS

Successful female entrepreneurs and their young colleagues overcome obstacles

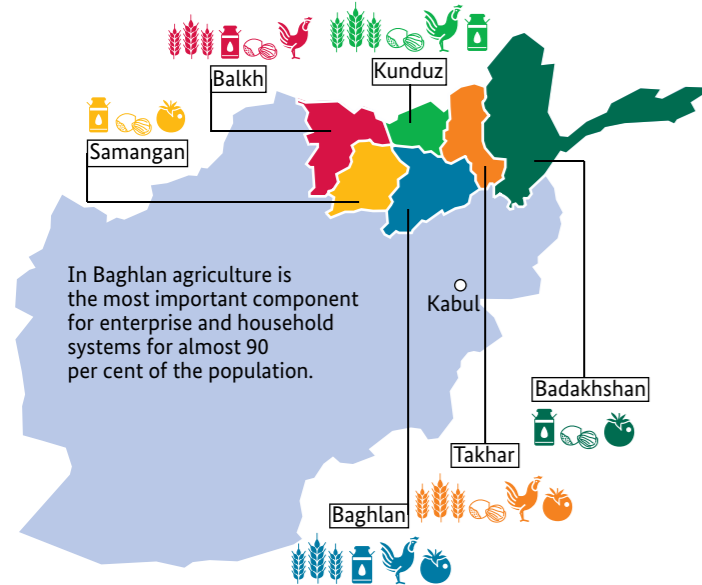
36

FACTS & FIGURES Results and achievements in employment, infrastructure development and policy dialogues



Creating additional value

Since 2014 the SEDEP programme has been optimising five agricultural value chains in Northern Afghanistan. Micro-enterprises are intended to generate more income and employment.



Flashback to 2014: To further develop its intervention in the field of sustainable economic development, the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is implementing a new programme in the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan on behalf of the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ). An analysis had studied the demand for agricultural products and the required market access. In addition to the government, entrepreneurs and associations were involved in examining production methods, transport routes, logistics and distribution channels and their impact on productivity. The general question was: How can the sector become a motor for growth and employment? It was well-known that agriculture traditionally plays a key role in the national economy – 85 per cent of the population work in this sector. The analysis also confirmed that in the Northeast more than half of Afghans earn their daily bread in micro-enterprises. As subsistence farmers, they produce the goods needed for their own consumption and only market a small surplus. It is hardly surprising that their productivity and value added are limited – due to the small size of their cultivated land, poor access to finance and agricultural services, and markets for exports. Nonetheless, the sector provides more than two thirds of all jobs for women and offers a wide range of activities to young men and has the potential to replace 20 per cent of agricultural imports.

FEWER IMPORTS – MORE EXPORTS However, turnover and profits of companies as well as employment currently still remain at a low level. Another result of the analysis: To become fit for

All Icons: © Noun Project



Small herds, low yields – in the harsh climate of Afghanistan’s north, SEDEP supports the establishment of dairy value chains.

© T. Pritzl

competition, smallholder farmers need to master suitable cultivation methods. In addition, the issue to be addressed was how productivity and income can be increased while dependence on imports from regional countries, such as Pakistan, can be reduced. Meanwhile, the engineers of Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) are active on another front: they integrated the provinces in the north into Afghanistan’s road infrastructure. As early as 2010, the go-ahead had been given for the expansion of the national road from Khulm to Kunduz. It runs through the provinces of Balkh and Kunduz and intends to establish a direct connection between the two economic centres Mazar-i-Sharif and Kunduz – a competitive advantage for the traffic of local goods. This large project shortens the distance between the two cities by about half to around 110 kilometres – resulting in savings in fuel and CO₂ emissions as well as lower transport costs. This is not

only important for the transport of goods and people between the provinces, but also for transit traffic to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In other words: The region is growing together economically through this transport axis.

POVERTY REDUCTION – FOOD SECURITY Back to the analysis, the results of which had led to the following hypothesis: If the capacities of micro-enterprises are strengthened, it will lead to competitive products that increase sales and promote investments. This, in turn, will allow the local labour market and wages to grow and reduce pressures for migrating into urban areas or other countries. In practice, it was decided to strengthen agricultural value chains. They have the greatest potential to reduce poverty, guarantee food security and contribute to peace building. Step by step the →



SEDEP's three Fields of Action

SEDEP's core activity is strengthening agricultural **value chains (1)**. They are intended to create jobs and income, reduce poverty, ensure food security and contribute to peace building. GIZ engineers support this by rebuilding agricultural **infrastructure (2)** including roads, bridges, canals and storehouses. The programme is complemented by **Public-Private Dialogues (3)**. GIZ regularly invites the government and the private sector to join round tables in order to improve the business environment.

→ findings and ideas developed from a concept into a programme. Its name: "Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion" – SEDEP. Its objective: To optimise production, processing and market integration of MSMEs in five value chains to enable them to supply goods in the quantity and quality demanded by the market. Imports should be replaced and export markets should be accessed. Furthermore, functioning value chains offer women and young people jobs and economic prospects, so that they, in turn, can promote social progress. Such progress is important in a country that is among the poorest of the world.

ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION Due to social barriers the access of marginalised groups, among them women, young people, returnees and internally displaced persons, to resources such as land, knowledge and capital, is limited. In order to change this, but above all to reinforce SEDEP's impact, two further fields of action were included in the programme.

In addition to value chains, the programme deals with the reconstruction of agricultural infrastructure, such as on-farm storage facilities and irrigation systems, which were damaged or destroyed by floods or landslides. Finally, in order to improve framework conditions for entrepreneurs, government representatives and private entrepreneurs are invited to round tables on Public-Private Dialogues (PPD).

GIZ is implementing the project in the provinces in cooperation with GFA Consulting Group. In addition to the private sector, the Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoIC), the Ministry for Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) are project partners.

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR COOPERATE Ministry representatives in the provinces Balkh, Samangan and Baghlan, as well as in Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan, were responsible for operational support on the ground. The analysis had prioritised →

The production of gherkins requires specific knowledge. Apart from the costs of the raw materials cucumber, carrot or onion, costs are also incurred for energy, salaries, packing material and marketing.

→ dairy products, poultry, vegetables and wheat as staple foods for the domestic market and, in addition, almonds for export.

“Wheat production and poultry breeding for the domestic market have a direct impact on the availability of food,” says GFA Team Leader Frank Millsopp. “Although export products offer more economic potential, they are also subject to risks related to production volumes, quality standards and price fluctuations.”

SERVING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

To better understand the contexts, each chain was broken down to identify relevant actors, such as input suppliers, producers, processors and traders. Thereby, the roles and contributions of individual actors in production, processing and trade became visible.

« Our Business Training Units offer producers, service providers and processing companies individual competence packages according to their needs. »

“Being active in five chains at the same time is quite a challenge, but opens up scope for unusual approaches,” recalls Sayed Azim, one of the Regional Coordinators.

One of these approaches is to cooperate with market-ready producers who have a minimum level of resources such as land, capital and labour. “We do not primarily support business start-ups, but identify established enterprises or associations to develop them further,” Azim continues.

The question remained as to how productivity could be increased as quickly as possible and how employment could be created across all phases of value creation. To this end, the project staff developed

an upgrading strategy to meet the constraints identified in the analysis. “Business Training Units” are one such measure. Their task: To design courses for skills development of value chain actors. These training units have the potential to develop into stand-alone business models in the long term.

TRAINING MODULES ACCORDING TO SEASON AND GROWING CYCLES

Team manager Tahiri Najmuddin is certain that “it was the combination of technical and entrepreneurial skills of the team that provided the input for the upgrading of the chains.” When these skills are not sufficient, the expertise of national and international specialists is consulted. As a rule, however, SEDEP trainers teach the fundamentals for the functioning of the chains. In the first phase, specific training modules were designed. They are guided by seasons and cultivation cycles and have been utilized to train 23,000 actors to the present day. For example, in January, poultry farmers learn more about poultry-stable hygiene, ventilation and temperature control. Dairy farmers are trained on how to rear new-born calves and vaccinate cows at the right time.

In March, training for vegetable farmers deals with crop rotation, moisture control in greenhouses and new varieties that produce good yields also in the off-season. Wheat farmers, too, are informed about the advantages of new seed varieties and learn which methods to use later in the spring to combat bacterial or insect infestation. In early summer, fertilization and disease management are top priorities for the orchard owners. This way they can harvest good quality almonds or pistachios between July and September. The programme is completed by support on how to graft fruit and nut trees in autumn and how to store the harvest correctly over the winter.

MORE KNOWLEDGE – HIGHER INCOME “The transfer of knowledge results in higher yields and earnings,” according to Thomas Steinsberger, GFA’s second Regional Coordinator. Currently, producers employ 7,441 full-time employees, more than one in three are women. They earn an average of 138,000 Afghani (1,528



Field of Action two supports activities in the value chains through targeted investments for improving the infrastructure. Up until now 60 projects have been executed, among them canals, bridges and mills.

EUR) per year. “This has created trust. Word of mouth has spread this success in the provinces, aroused interest and paved the way for further activities,” Steinsberger says.

The poultry, milk and nut value chains showcase how training modules have developed into agricultural extension services. The chains have a common problem: Their production is susceptible to bacteria, viruses or parasites – if they are not detected epidemics can lead to bankruptcy for whole enterprises.

Innovative entrepreneurs turned this into their source of income. As input suppliers, they offer farmers and orchard owners services to prevent, detect and control epidemics or insect infestations. In addition, they prune fruit trees in a way for them to stay healthy and productive – this way former training participants have evolved into service providers.

FROM TRAINING TO BUSINESS MODELS The case of a female veterinarian of the International Labour Organization (IOA) is another good example. When looking for a new job she raised the question to whether the training was only accessible for men. She knew unemployed women para veterinarians in the provinces who were interested to be further trained. “I wanted to meet them,” veterinarian Hermann Vis says. Immediately, the veterinarian returned to the office with 15 women.

Today, they are registered with the ministry as para veterinarians and offer their services. New paths have also been taken in terms of financing: Like the para veterinarians, the majority of input suppliers are paid by the producers only after the harvest. This way farmers can profit from delaying payment for vital services until after the harvest.



Ensure quality – reduce food losses

INTERVIEW India is Afghanistan’s most important export destination for grapes, dried fruit and nuts. Export requirements demand that processing, transport and storage guarantee the necessary quality of the products at the point of sale. An interview with **Dr. R. K. Sharma**.



Potatoes and onions do not go together in the cold store, but pumpkins and melons do.

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Dr. Sharma, after harvest fresh produce begins to rot. How does coldness affect the process?

The products remain “alive” after harvesting, their breathing continues until decay. Low temperatures slow this down and extend the shelf life. This is one factor. Relative humidity and carbon dioxide content are other factors. They all are specific for each product.

So the right temperature is not only a condition for quality, it also reduces food loss?

That’s right. Today, food losses are dramatic. In 2050, 10 billion people will have to be fed with limited land and water resources. Proper pre-cooling, packaging, transport and storage reduce losses all the way to the end consumer.

Time and distance are key factors. What does this mean for value chains?

Value chains work because actors create added value in each function of the chain. They all can profit from sales with higher prices and margins. The faster products are cooled, the higher margins can be. But cold chains are cost-intensive when considering logistics, management, and staff wages.

You are saying that not only the infrastructure but also qualified staff are needed. What role does SEDEP play here?

We do not only need qualified workers but also competent operators. Both are lacking and as a consequence, so are high-quality products of Afghan producers. The programme gathers and trains all chain actors. For example, cold-storage operators are equipped with the necessary know-how. In this way, the existing infrastructure can now be used and local workers can be trained as professional operators.

This means that less developed economies can sell their products to more distant markets?

That’s correct. Cold chains have made apples available all year round in almost all countries worldwide. That is how less developed economies can make progress in terms of higher incomes for their farmers. Of course, this should not be encouraged at the cost of domestic food security.



Dr. R. K. Sharma, expert on cold chains and agribusiness. He advises SEDEP on quality assurance in fruit and vegetable production.



Feed management, vaccination, milking – topics on which information is provided like here in Taloqan.

“To motivate our employees to think in business terms was an important factor for such innovative models,” Millsopp emphasizes. These models were again called for when it came to establishing and expanding supply and business relationships. After all, yoghurt, eggs, chicken, cucumbers, pumpkin, dried fruit and nuts need to find their buyers.

STRENGTHENING MANAGEMENT SKILLS For this to happen the focus turned to entrepreneurial skills. After all, in order to sell products with a profit and to gain a market share, they not only have to be hygienically flawless – business skills are also important. For the step towards market orientation different ways were identified to increase the overall performance of each value chain. This time with modules that introduce actors into agricultural economics and management skills. They deal with accounting, product development, marketing and the establishment of business relationships. The trainers also introduced actors into the classic models of contract farming. In the wheat value chain, for instance, contract farming works as follows: Farmers sign a contract with a producer’s association or wheat association to grow a certain wheat variety. The association, in turn, guarantees the purchase of the harvest at a fair price. Farmers

« We are filling a gap because authorities are often unable to fulfill their mandate due to lacking capacity. »

therefore have their livelihood secured and the associations can sell the grain at a profit to mill operators.

INCREASING THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF THE VALUE CHAINS Because the associations want to improve quality, they support their producers and traders in the discussions about their challenges. SEDEP has only recently started to address the topic of cold chains, a downstream chain function. The expert in this field is Dr. R. K. Sharma: The Indian expert provides information on seed breeding, plant protection, harvesting and storage. Harvesting and storage are the bottlenecks and their challenges have to be considered. “Potatoes and onions don’t go together,” Sharma says, “the former require a humidity level of 90 per cent and more whereas onions already start to rot with this humidity.” Training →

→ modules dealing with storage methods and the treatment of fruits and vegetables serve to reduce food losses. However, one problem remained: Storage facilities were not available in all provinces. GIZ engineers from the second field of action tackled the problem. They had already enabled better cultivation for almost 8,000 farmers by rehabilitating canals or water reservoirs. Road construction projects in particular offered unemployed men the chance to gain a financial foothold. These projects had been supported by the GIZ “Cash for Work” programme. On-farm storage facilities for wheat and root vegetables were built – 8,000 farmers have benefitted from these facilities to the present day.

FEWER LOSSES WITH CORRECT STORAGE The management of storing processes remained critical. Cold store operators as well as local technicians had to update their knowledge on standards

« Crash courses provide refugees and returnees with skills for their everyday work. »

and quality controls involved in storage or application of chemicals against fungal infestation. In addition, contacts had to be established between operators and producers. “Operators prepare contracts with the producers based on variety, volumes and quality,” Dr. Sharma explains.

Another short remark on the cooperation with associations: Their training competence is checked beforehand based on assessment modules. SEDEP currently supports 25 women groups active in the vegetable processing sector – in Balkh and the other provinces. “We have moved from the micro level to the meso level,” Millsopp says. The associations train their producers to ensure that they deliver good quality products in sufficient quantities. Furthermore, they are an important lever for contacts to new chain actors.

“If someone wants to produce pickled gherkins or earn a living with the production of naan bread and cookies, we refer them to these civil society groups,” Steinsberger adds.

Such networks have other tasks: They strengthen the regional economy and can involve small farmers on the verge of marketability through value creation. However, until associations were able to support their members, several challenges had to be faced.

INTEGRATING ASSOCIATIONS AND COOPERATIVES

Producers, for example, did not understand the concept of a regular payment of membership fees. From market information, quality training, certification standards to export requirements or support on marketing and financing – the associations had learned to offer additional services.

It does not always have to be study trips like the one to Gilgit in Pakistan where orchard operators, traders and 40 members of a provincial nuts association were invited to learn about new cultivation and processing techniques. The associations were created to also fill this institutional gap. “Agricultural authorities in the provinces are often not able to fulfil their mandate due to a lack of staff or financial capacity. This is where the associations can make an impact,” Millsopp says.

Private companies in particular could assume the role of advising on the use of operating resources and their financing. However, financial institutions have shown that the concepts do not yet reflect market realities. At present, interest rates and securities are too high. However, alternative mechanisms are constantly being developed.

SHARPENING PROFILES FOR INVESTORS In order for value creation to work business relationships are just as important as the clarification of financing modalities. This is why SEDEP focuses on sharpening profiles. Trade fairs or consumer exhibitions are very fitting. As early as 2016 at an agricultural fair in Mazar-i-Sharif, 70 “Business Match Making” events were organised with the Balkh Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCCI).

The idea originated in field of action three: A Public-Private Dialogue

« We are launching initiatives at the meso-level to involve government bodies and institutions. »

had demonstrated that investors had little knowledge about the sector. 180 exhibitors – including 60 female entrepreneurs – used the fair to initiate contacts. The business models were explained to more than 8,000 interested parties. At the events, 50 companies concluded contracts. No wonder that over 80 per cent of PPD participants were satisfied with the event. The “Business Climate Monitor” shows how the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has been integrated at the macro level. The index records economic development through indicators, from company registration to access to credit and export processes. The monitor is compiled according to World Bank standards and places Afghanistan in the global context.

INITIATIVES AT THE MACRO LEVEL “ACCI establishes the index every year with our support,” GIZ project manager Robert Glass says. One result is the “One stop shop policy” for export transactions. It enables faster procedures because business processes no longer extend across several authorities and over longer periods of time, but are handled centrally.

The development of competencies in combination with the elimination of infrastructure gaps and business obstacles through Public-Private Dialogues make SEDEP what it is. Each field of action plays a complementary role for the others. “This is the only way for all action fields to unfold their impact,” Millsopp summarises for his team. This, too, has developed over time: All of today’s GFA managers started out as trainers.

For two years now, the focus has also been on seasonal employment and the integration of internally displaced persons from provinces that continue to experience conflict. And the stream of returnees

from Pakistan and Iran is not decreasing. The result: Once again women have to deal with new challenges to support their families because their husbands have no income.

OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES TO REFUGEES In order to offer them prospects at home, SEDEP has designed crash training courses ranging from mobile phone repair to backyard poultry farming to sewing as well as beautician training for women. “The training courses target crafting skills for practical use and target all members of the community,” Millsopp emphasises. After all, the aim is to avoid conflicts. Often, graduates create their own businesses upon completing the course.

But how can women contribute to income if they are only allowed to work at home for cultural reasons? “Mushroom cultivation was suitable for generating income at home,” says team manager Tahiri. The Social Welfare & Rehabilitation Organisation (SWRO) was assigned to implement the training. The first seminar was attended by 500 women, first in Baghlan and later in Balkh, Herat and Bamyan.

CONVEYING PRACTICAL SKILLSETS Among them was Alia Jarobari, who returned to Baghlan after 24 years of exile in Pakistan. “The following four years were a struggle for survival,” she recalls. Her husband sold soup in the old town, her son washed dishes instead of going to school. “We got by rather badly, saving money was out of the question,” Alia says.

In 2018, her husband registered her as a trainee with SWRO. “I learned how to cultivate, process and package mushrooms,” Alia remarks. She received a toolkit and, after 20 days, harvested mushrooms at home for the first time. She sells the majority of her harvest at the local bazaar and earns between 12,000 and 20,000 Afghani every month (133 – 221 EUR). She uses the remaining mushrooms for cooking. “I help the family and my son can go back to school,” Alia continues. Like the other 19,500 graduates of the training courses she is optimistic about the future. ■

Cooperatives and clusters

The fight against bacteria

“When I saw the washing plant of a dairy facility in Bangladesh on a study trip, I knew that this innovation could solve a serious problem,” Matiullah Safi says. The GFA expert is alluding to milk losses at collection points caused by the lack of hygiene in the cans. The result: Dairies are again and again short of raw milk for processing. Suppliers, in turn, lose income. SEDEP had a similar plant reconstructed by local craftsmen. In addition, the collection points received hygienic aluminium cans. “In order to be bacteriologically safe, they have to be cleaned and then disinfected,” Safi continues. The fight against bacteria is perfected with a test. The delivered milk is tested directly for fat content and bacteria. The result: Overall 5 per cent fewer losses.

IN 2015, A SEDEP ANALYSIS showed that the annual volume of over five million tonnes of dairy products is not enough to meet Northern Afghanistan’s demand. Livestock farming and the associated industry need to be optimised so that imports decline. Although semi-commercial farms with 10 – 15 cows are the most profitable ones, most of the milk is produced on small farms with fewer than five cows. “99 per cent of producers are female,” Matiullah Safi comments, “they process milk at the household or retail level.” In Mazar-i-Sharif, the focus of SEDEP moved to the Women Dairy Centre, which operates the cooperative Roshan. 22 women work together with the Agriculture Training Institute, which is connected to the Ministry of Agriculture. They want to showcase how they create employment for their female companions.

TRAINING AND SERVICES FOR A FEE Roshan and SEDEP agreed to meet. The cooperative presented its business model: It grows corn or sorghum and sells it to buy the bulk feed for its own four cows. They produce 64 litres of milk every day, 300 more litres are collected from the surrounding area. Roshan processes part of the milk into yoghurt, the rest goes to dairies or retailers. Together, the concept of the cooperative was optimised. To support the programme, SEDEP equipped the centre with tools, freezers and milk cans. At the same time, the services were identified which Roshan – after having been trained – can offer to others for a fee. They range from livestock farming to hygiene in milk collection to product distribution. The demand for these services is guaranteed. In Mazar-i-Sharif alone, there are 15 farms that process between 150 and 400 litres of milk every day.

SEASONAL TRAININGS They are the ideal target group for both Roshan and other agricultural service providers: “Whether it is hay harvesting or vaccination, each month topics are offered according to the current season,” Safi says. In addition to men, 35 women were qualified as para veterinarians – in Balkh alone, 3,400 cows were vaccinated against anthrax. But let’s get back to the hundreds of small farmers who deliver raw milk to the collection centres each morning by 9:30 am.

Because this is where problems regularly occur. “There is no cooling on the way to the centres,” Safi continues. Especially in summer, the bacteria multiply so fast in just two hours that the perishable milk can no longer be sold.



The Safa Dairy is one of the numerous micro enterprises to which 9,000 women in the provinces deliver their milk – here they are preparing Quroot.

BACTERIAL EXPLOSION ON THE “FIRST MILE” That’s why SEDEP motivated producers to form clusters around the collection points. In this way, the milk can be collected efficiently and tested before being processed. The model also facilitates the creation of saving schemes for the women producers – a promising option because it is easier for clusters to shoulder investments for the optimisation of this chain link. SEDEP concentrates on customary refrigerators such as the Steca PF 166 DC.

SEDEP is presently working with the University of Hohenheim to design and locally fabricate a solar cooler to rapidly cool the milk at the collection centres. The purchase pays off because cool storage increases production, and there are price premiums from bulk buyers. One of these bulk buyers is the dairy facility Pakiza. It produces one sixth of the milk products consumed by the citizens of the provincial capital of Balkh. ■

To the present day,
SEDEP has trained

7,953
female and 3,400 male
dairy farmers.



Improving the economic situation

INTERVIEW Abdul Matin “Quasin” is President of the Pakiza Livestock and Dairy Production Company. He founded the dairy in 2012. Today, 50 employees produce yoghurt, cream cheese and buttermilk – the product range is growing. The milk is supplied by hundreds of micro-enterprises, which SEDEP had helped to get on their feet.



« We are market-oriented. Where there is no demand, it is not advisable to take part in competition. »

Abdul Matin “Quasin”

Abdul, what made you an entrepreneur?

I realised that high-quality dairy products are needed, but that there were no domestic companies that met this need. Virtually all dairy products were imported.

And how did you come into contact with SEDEP?

In 2015, SEDEP visited our dairy facility and supported us to organise a milk chain to improve the quality of the milk. The programme supported the construction of five collection centres in Khulm. We provided the land for this purpose.

This is rather the hardware, what happened in terms of operations?

We received training on milk preservation and correct cattle feeding. SEDEP also distributed milking chairs, cans, filters or lactometers to producers for quality assurance on the farm. In addition, an expert from Iran trained us. For two months he taught us everything about hygienic production of yoghurt or cheese. That made the work easier.

You have also set up a showroom in the city, right?

Yes, and SEDEP covered some of the costs. The point of sale is equipped with coolers. Two people are employed there. Of course we advertise our products, a visual presence with the customer is an important success factor. Consequently, the sales of our products have increased by 10 per cent.

That means you have established yourself among your customers?

Let's just say that we're in a very good position. At first, nobody knew us. Then we took part in exhibitions and conferences or invited students to visit the production facility. That's how we raised awareness that we buy from locals and that this improves their economic situation. This means that not only our employees but the community at large have benefited.



What number are you talking about exactly?

We employ 50 people directly and more than 4,500 indirectly. They produce the milk, collect it and sell it to us. Assuming that each one of them feeds a family of 3 or 4 people, we are talking about approximately 20,000 people who earn their daily bread thanks to this chain.

Which challenges remain?

Well, there are many challenges. Some have been solved, others not yet. The transport of the milk on the first mile, from the producer to the collection point, is still problematic on hot days. Then there is the competition with imported products or the difficult security situation. We must not forget that our collectors also visit insecure villages to collect the milk for us. ■



Left: The dairy facility Pakiza processes up to 4,000 litres of milk daily producing pasteurized milk, yoghurt and traditional cheese.

Right: The milk can washing plant has reduced the loss per 100 litres of milk from nine to five litres.

On the way to customer orientation

More than
2,000
 people attend
 long-term trainings
 according to the
 seasonal calendar to
 learn about the
 advantages of
 staggered sowing.



BAGH-E-SHA, SPRING 2018 Vegetable farmers in the south-west of Faizabad were once again threatened with losing a fifth of their production. The reason: The only irrigation channel was leaking after years of flooding. Huge amounts of water seeped away before reaching the fields. The situation was increasingly straining the local economy and an upgrading of the channel was proposed. The SEDEP engineers intervened, renewed the inflow and the canal lining – a few months later the fields could be irrigated again. But even when the infrastructure is intact and not damaged by floods, vegetable cultivation is not without risk: “Incorrect sowing or disease infestation of cabbage or pumpkin can lead to the loss of the harvest,” explains GFA expert Sarajuddin Jaihoon. In addition, if improper operational decisions are taken, farmers soon face existential challenges.

OUTDATED PRODUCTION METHODS Vegetable farmers rarely cultivate more than three Jerib – that’s around 6,000 square meters. The production method is outdated. Farmers grow local varieties depending on the season, harvest losses are high and marketing is poor. All this despite the fact that the demand for fresh vegetables is on the rise. “To benefit from this trend new methods or varieties are needed. And it is just as important to show that tomatoes or cucumbers also grow outside the usual season,” Jaihoon says.

Therefore, an increase in greenhouse production was proposed. According to the ministry there are currently more than 7,500 greenhouses across the country, but most of them are used rather poorly. “Physical presence alone is no guarantee for success,” Jaihoon continues. “Wrong cultivation methods can lead to salinization of the soil, and pests such as whiteflies can destroy entire crops.” In Balkh, Samangan, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces, SEDEP demonstrated how greenhouses can function under ideal conditions.

LEARNING ACCORDING TO THE SEASONAL CALENDAR Long-term training courses according to the seasonal calendar present seed varieties to growers and show the advantages of staggered sowing or how to control weeds – more than 2,000 interested farmers regularly refresh their knowledge. The Yasmin Company in Mazar-i-Sharif is active in pest management. The company was founded following a training course and has branches in the provinces where

SEDEP is active. Here, seeds are tested or advice on agrochemicals is provided. Later on producers profit from better quality and higher prices.

The programme also encourages study trips and trade fairs. In May 2019, ten vegetable growers from the Balkh Greenhouse Association visited Uzbekistan to learn about new agro-technologies, from pH meters to pollination techniques. The usefulness of such field visits is reflected in a higher overall performance of the value chain.

VALUE CHAIN ACTORS WITH A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE The seminars offered to women’s associations in the vegetable and fruit processing industry by SEDEP showcase how carrots, cucumbers and cherries can be turned into marketable products. The local authority for supporting women and agriculture identified members whose knowledge improved in the areas of pricing policy or marketing. “Know-how about such downstream aspects of this chain is a competitive advantage in Afghanistan,” says Mursal Satari, SEDEP project expert.

Zahra Afzali is a good example. In 2017, she attended a seminar and then founded the Mutahed Yosufi Food Processing Company together with her female partners. She heads the company which specialises in the traditional production of carrot jam and pickled gherkins. From a business management point of view, everything is going well. So SEDEP suggested to diversify the range of products. Afzali agreed.

STORAGE AS A BOTTLENECK Today, twelve women produce eight different types of compotes or jams – and process up to 140 kilograms of vegetables and fruits per week. They find their customers at trade fairs and sell the goods both in retail outlets and at markets in Mazar-i-Sharif. Afzali is certain: “Next year we are going to process 200 kilograms per week.” Challenges remain: The number of cold storage facilities in Balkh is limited. A coordination meeting between SEDEP, ILO and the four cold chain operators in Mazar-i-Sharif aimed at changing this situation.

TREND-SETTING DECISIONS BY CONSENSUS Another participant was expert Dr. Sharma. The result of the meeting: A refrigerated truck transporting fruit and vegetables to the warehouses. The United Nations Organization ILO intends to cover up to 35 per cent of the costs, the rest will be covered by the cold chain operators. At the same time, Dr. Sharma informs about the correct storage of grapes, apples, melons and pumpkins. The Indian expert had started a cross-learning initiative: Initiated by SEDEP, seven Afghan operators were certified by the “Global Cold Chain Alliance” (GCCA) in his home city of Delhi. The effect: The cold store operator Bahar Dehqan will convert his company into three smaller units to store melons, pumpkins and grapes. ■



Model greenhouses demonstrate the cultivation of field crops out of season – the production methods must be appropriate, otherwise the salt content of the soil increases or pest infestations threaten the harvest.

Domestic products replace imports

BACKYARD POULTRY FARMING Everywhere in Afghanistan’s rural districts, poultry farming plays an important role for the local economy. Women in particular earn an extra income by raising ten to 15 chickens and selling eggs and meat to help meet their family’s basic needs. The problem: Production methods have long since become outdated – poor hygiene or health, inappropriate stables characterise everyday life. “This was well understood,” says Nabi Sultani, “and we reacted by offering training courses for para veterinarians who updated micro-farms on stable hygiene, feed, parasites or vaccinations.” Consultations rose on average from 30 to 50 per month, but a bottleneck remained. Production costs for chicks are a problem for the entire poultry industry. Regardless of whether meat or eggs are produced – the supply of the days old chicks must be secured.

HIGH PRODUCTION COSTS AT LOCAL LEVEL Because this is not the case poultry breeders import chicks from Pakistan or Iran – including the feed. With substitution of imports being one of SEDEP’s goals, the topic was further discussed. The analysis also showed that high costs put local producer cooperatives such as Taj-e-Telayee at a competitive disadvantage. Because chicks need consistently high temperatures in the first days of their lives, energy costs in the hatchery were too high.

The president of the cooperative, Khaja Mohammad Sediq, was determined to change this. He put emphasis on solar energy, received a loan from the Asian Development Bank and installed the panels. However, they did not produce sufficient electricity. SEDEP learned about the situation, intervened and provided technical support. “Although Afghanistan is sunny, renewable energy is largely unknown,” Sediq noted.

THE FIRST GAME CHANGER To promote the model, SEDEP organised roadshows and workshops in the six target provinces. The activities were intended to attract investors. Farmers or breeders – at first everyone was convinced that solar panels and batteries could not keep the incubator running. But soon the first solar-powered hatchery went into operation and turned out to be a true game changer. The panels generate ten kilowatts of electricity and cover between 60 and 65 per cent of the energy costs. The rest is covered by the power grid or biomass. “The price

Training courses by para veterinarians updated the know-how of micro-enterprises in the fields of stable hygiene, feed, parasites and vaccinations. Consultations per month rose on average from **30 to 50.**



Due to better hygienic conditions after the modernisation of the chicken houses, the mortality rate of the chicks decreased and, on top of that, two additional breeding cycles are now possible.

for chicks has, of course, fallen,” Sediq sums up. 60 poultry farmers and 150 small breeders in the producers’ cooperative benefit from the innovation, which SEDEP helped to finance with 3,500 EUR.

PRODUCTION SLUMPS IN WINTER AND SUMMER “In this way, a bottleneck was removed,” Sultani recalls. However, the decline in poultry production and the loss of sales and income in the winter and summer months had not yet been solved. The inspection of the breeding farms revealed that the lack of insulation of the traditional mortar buildings was the main reason for the economic losses. “It was too cold in winter and too hot in summer,” Sultani continues, “and the stables were also difficult to clean or disinfect.”

As a consequence, the first energy-saving poultry stable was built in Dehdadi. It offers space for raising 1,200 to 4,000 chickens. Walls were insulated, windows, solar panels and a ventilation system were installed. At the same time “everything impairing cleaning or the disinfection of the house was removed,” Sultani says. Positive changes followed soon.

« *High costs were a competitive disadvantage, more energy efficiency in the chicken house improved the situation.* »





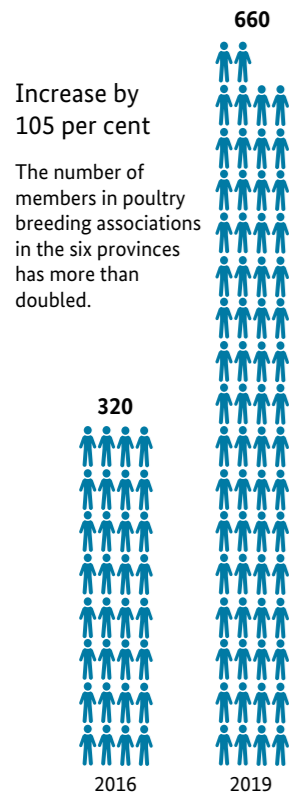
Explanations at the wooden model during roadshows ensured that the advantages of the technology were understood.

→ **THE SECOND GAME CHANGER** The mortality rate decreased by almost one fifth compared to rearing in traditional mud poultry stables. What's more, the cost of coal and wood for heating was reduced by 40 per cent. Although SEDEP informed all local entrepreneurs and associations about the success, they were not convinced of the technology. Therefore, another innovation was added. "We built a wooden model to show how the air circulates and how collectors work," Sultani explains. The design of the new stable, together with the innovations in operations, were also described in a brochure and presented at trade fairs. Then the last hurdle was tackled: Financing. SEDEP provided microcredits and assisted 27 poultry farms to install glazed windows, build concrete floors in the stables and install new feeding installations.

MORE PRODUCTION CYCLES Sayed Abdul Hadi from Balkhabian is one of the poultry farmers. He raises 2,000 broilers per cycle. The weight of each chicken has increased by 200 grams on average and the mortality rate has dropped to 3.5 per cent. "Before, the stable could only be used for four cycles, because cleaning and disinfecting took a lot of time," Hadi says. Today, he operates six annual cycles, keeps his books in order, and generates a net profit of 386,400 Afghani (4,279 EUR) per year. Imports from Pakistan or Iran have decreased.

Although value chains for poultry in Badakhshan have only recently become known, the model of producer cooperatives is also gaining ground here. Just recently, 80 farmers decided to establish a cooperative and to register it with the agricultural authorities. Hence it is also easier for them to establish contacts with suppliers of chicks or feed. In total, poultry associations in all SEDEP target provinces now have a total of 660 members – more than double the number five years ago.

THE POLITICAL FACTOR INTEREST GROUPS The industry has thus become a political factor. For example, the topic of market access has been taken onto the agenda for a public-private dialogue. A law stipulated that the Ministry of Defence had to order a share of chicken meat for the army at local level, but this was not done. Farmers and the Ministry of Trade demanded a change – since July 2019, the procurement policy is functional. Farmers have not yet reached this stage in their access to finance, but talks are underway with microfinance institutions. ■



Exploiting economic potential

THE CITY OF TALOQAN IN TAKHAR is considered to be one of the most important nut markets. Almonds or pistachios are not only traded locally, but also with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan or India as well as with Turkey. Nevertheless, economic potential remains untapped. The reason: In order to obtain supplies, buyers visit the growing areas even before the harvest. "They encourage farmers and collectors to harvest nuts for cash even if they are not yet ripe," SEDEP expert Zarin Hameedullah says.

This tactic seems to work. Many farmers ignore drying the nuts according to the motto, "more weight brings more money". However, in the end the tactic does not work after all. The moist environment is ideal for pests and the mould aflatoxin. If, in addition, hygienic conditions are poor, severe quality losses are incurred. This problem has been a thorn in the eye for the Takhar Dry Fruit Association (TDFA). The association was founded in 2010 to establish contacts between producers and traders. In addition, it wanted to standardise primary processing in order →



The association WONUB started with five women, today it counts 3,750 members.

« We want to increase our production volume by **20** per cent each year. »





Men hardly participate in cleaning or sorting the nut crop – the work is poorly paid.

→ to meet buyers’ quality requirements. But how could this link in the value chain be organised? After all, women collect the nuts, crack and clean them in their own households. At least 30,000 women in Balkh, Samangan, Takhar, Kunduz and Badakhshan earn income this way.

COORDINATION WITH LOCAL COUNCILS “The work is poorly paid,” Hameedullah explains. “There are hardly any food safety rules and certification is rarely discussed.” That’s why SEDEP, in cooperation with the Community Development Council (CDC), identified interested women in Takhar. The aim was to establish a self-help group. What started with five women has grown to 3,750 women – a critical mass. They initiated the Women Nut-Cracking Business (WONUB). TDFA recognized the opportunity for an innovative business model. The vision of the Takhar Association Business Unit

(TABU) is the “fair integration of women as reliable suppliers of quality nuts”. A processing centre was established.

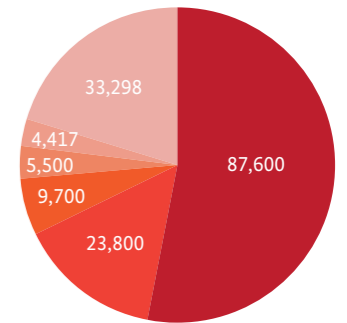
SEDEP provided cracking tables and gloves, steel hammer and the wire sieve for almonds and walnuts. Shortly after, 300 women were cracking and packing almonds, pistachios and walnuts – they get 300 Afghani (more than three euros) in cash every day. Working under one roof, at fixed working hours and in a hygienic environment resulted in less waste in a shorter time.

MONEY ARRIVES AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL What’s more: Given that 600 almond farmers, 128 pistachio collectors, and 2000 owners of walnut plantations are affiliated with TABU, the availability of nuts has increased. “Additionally, the main season from August to January can be extended to nine months,” managing director Habibullah Noori says. Of course, this is reflected in the payment: The monthly income of each WONUB member increased by 69 per cent to AFN 3,130 (more than 35 EUR) – money that arrives at the community level. TABU currently sells 600 tons of almonds, 840 tons of pistachios and 2,400 tons of walnuts per year. No wonder, since 96 members of the TDFA are wholesalers. They ensure sales, have excellent connections to national markets, for example Mazar-i-Sharif or the international market through Kabul. Capacity is expected to increase by 20 per cent every year. “This will only be possible if the ISO or Halal certifications required by the buyers are fulfilled,” Noori says.

Back to the TDFA, which, in addition to nuts, also processes cherries, mulberries and apricots into dried fruit. “Together with SEDEP we train nurseries and fruit growers in business planning and harvest management to reduce production losses,” Noori says. Some graduates develop their own services afterwards. They practice pruning techniques with orchard farmers that help increase yields and are paid by the farmers.

To ensure that the services become known SEDEP supports them to promote their services through local radio broadcasts. With success: Recently, 68 of 385 nut producers and 65 of 450 orchard owners confirmed that they used this service and paid the services rendered directly to the private service providers. Almond yields alone increased by up to 25 per cent. ■

Production of dried apricots*



■ Turkey, 53 per cent
 ■ Iran, 14 per cent
 ■ Uzbekistan, 6 per cent
 ■ China, 3 per cent
 ■ Afghanistan, 3 per cent
 ■ Others, 21 per cent

*Average of the last 5 years, in tonnes

Dangers in a humid environment

If nuts or fruits are not properly dried after harvesting, aflatoxins can develop. When traces of this substance appeared in a sample, a SEDEP expert showed how the carcinogenic mould is eliminated by a standard process including drying.

Uncoordinated key sector

Seeds often too late

400 contract farmers grow wheat for the Samangan Seed Company. Mohammad Jafar is the director of the company, which has ten members.

Mr. Jafar, what is your business about?

We supply our partners with ultrapure seeds. Its premium quality increases yields by up to 40 per cent.

How many partners receive the power seed?

About 60 per cent. The rest sows local seed. After the harvest, they give us new seeds back. We pass part of it on to the Ministry of Agriculture.

What is your relationship with the Ministry?

The Ministry provides improved seeds – unfortunately often too late. Nothing more. The farmers have to buy their own fertilizers or pesticides.

WHEAT CULTIVATION IS CONSIDERED KEY to Afghanistan's food security. The average per capita consumption is 160 kilograms per year. Until 1977, Afghanistan was self-sufficient for ten years. Since then imports from Kazakhstan, for example, have supplied the local market. Not even half of the wheat fields in the Northern provinces can be irrigated, and fertility is low. Despite its key role, the sector is suffering. The government buys seeds too late, wheat farmers do not have enough information about grain varieties, cannot afford fertilisers, do not care enough about weeds or pests, sow early or harvest late, all which results in losses and poor quality. SEDEP countered this with a hypothesis: If farmers are motivated to cultivate new varieties and, at the same time, learn about modern cultivation methods, yields and the availability of wheat flour will increase, so that bakeries can be run more profitably and food security increases. In addition, such a process offers transparency, from breeding over seed selection to cultivation and further processing. "It sounds simple, but it isn't," GFA expert Amiri Noorullah says.

PRACTICE FOR EVERYDAY LIFE WITH DEMONSTRATION FIELDS But let's start at the beginning: In order to improve seed production and speed up the harvest, the partial coverage of costs made it easier for cooperatives to purchase tractors and machinery for threshing or land preparation. Afterwards demonstration fields for irrigated areas were set up. The purpose: Farmers and service providers were expected to learn more about seeds and cultivation practices as well as to network. "Field days" dealt with sowing, fertilisation, irrigation and the control of pests and diseases. A problem was identified: Many farmers already start sowing winter wheat in late summer. "They are sowing in dry soils and in this way a considerable proportion of the seed is lost before germination," Noorullah says. In order to change this, SEDEP project staff initiated targeted information to cooperatives through local radio messages. Radio messages encourage farmers to wait until the first rains are over before sowing in autumn. At the same time, flyers and posters provide tips on wheat cultivation. The strategy has been successful: 352 of 405 farmers in five provinces are currently using improved seeds and are achieving between 10 and 15 per cent higher yields. Domestic wheat flour production is on the rise, thus providing larger quantities of quality flour. A young guild had waited for this – female bakers.



The Char Sang Agriculture Cooperative does not only use the machines itself – they are also rented to 124 other producers for ploughing and harvesting.

Khala Shahjahan bakes and sells more than 200 loaves of bread every day at the Bakery Training Centre in Mazar-i-Sharif.



WHEAT FLOUR FOR FEMALE BAKERS New prospects opened up for them in 2016. Back then, the Department of Women Affairs together with the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) selected women to start bakeries. Among the first was Sumaya Maligzada who was so enthusiastic about the idea of earning her own money that she immediately founded an association: The Takhar Women Bakery Group (TWBG) in Taloqan – the two institutions became partners.

Naan bread is part of every Afghan meal. The dough is prepared with wheat flour, water, salt and yeast and baked in the traditional wood clay oven. While SEDEP helped with the construction of the bakery, Sumaya learned how to improve the nutritional value of the bread as well as hygienic conditions. Meanwhile, nine additional women have become associated with Sumaya. Together they developed ideas for the sales rooms and products. They already shared a vision: TWBG wanted to become the leading supplier of wheat flour products. The centre started to work. Initially, the women baked 400 loaves of bread in a smoke-free environment – in an energy-efficient oven. After only a few months the capacity was increased with an improved tandoori. Now 600 loaves of bread can be produced per day. Samosas or biscuits and cakes were added to the range of products – between 50 and 70 kilograms of these are baked and delivered to consumers every day. 18 women have full-time jobs – their income has increased by 80 per cent. Sumaya patiently follows the rehabilitation of the mills in the area: "As soon as this rehabilitation is completed, the supply of quality flour is ensured for us and we can really produce sustainably." ■

50
per cent of the
220 farmers
who received advices
use innovations. The
use of power seed
increased by one fifth.



Developing infrastructure - removing business obstacles

The Federal Republic of Germany links its engagement in Afghanistan to the preservation of infrastructure investments. In addition to the core issue of value chains, SEDEP is active in two other fields: The establishment and expansion of agricultural infrastructure and the organisation of Public-Private Dialogues, which are intended to improve the framework conditions for companies.



Aimal Danishyar (left) is responsible for infrastructure, his colleague Jalal Hasibullah (right) for Public-Private Dialogues.

Aimal, why was it important to include the topic of infrastructure in the programme?

Because a functioning infrastructure is the basis for every economic development. Investments in the construction of a canal to irrigate a field, for example, contribute to increasing the income of farmers or cooperatives active in the value chains. In addition, jobs are created in the short term. But we also have another goal: to make improved water systems available to 100,000 families, i.e. around 700,000 people.

To what extent are the provinces involved in the decision-making process?

At the beginning of each year and in cooperation with the Community Development Councils, we identify the most urgent projects needed to improve production or processing capacities. All activities are coordinated with our partners; they are responsible for the implementation.

This means that they are not only responsible for the selection of the projects, but also for their implementation?

It was a success factor to involve the District Authorities, especially since our partners contribute at least 20 per cent of the construction costs. Each community has a representative who is responsible for administration, use and maintenance. He is involved in the whole process, from the selection of projects to their implementation and their handover. Afterwards, the community is responsible for maintenance activities.

This sounds transparent. Public-Private Dialogues are also supposed to ensure transparency in decision-making processes. Jalal, what role does SEDEP play here?

The programme is both the catalyst and the process consultant. The first policy dialogue at national level took place in 2015. Public authorities generally do not know much about the needs of the private sector. The dialogues bring together civil servants, private actors and institutions such as the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In these dialogues, they represent their interests and decide on measures. The aim is to remove obstacles.

What obstacles are you talking about?

This may be a gender issue, such as the problematic access of women to financial services, or a directive determining internal processes in administrations. In general, such and similar conflict areas are identified together with our partner ministries and are then introduced into the political decision-making process.

« The City Entry Tax had become a source of income for criminals. The road toll was made a subject of discussion and has already been abolished in some provinces. »

Can you give us a concrete example?

An example is the City Entry Tax – a tax that cities levy on goods and which entailed a double burden for poultry producers. The road toll made products unnecessarily expensive and they did not arrive in time. Criminals turned these illegal checkpoints into their source of income. The tax was discussed and, in some provinces, could be abolished.

Does this mean that you mainly focus on the national level? Not at all. All departments of the national ministries in the provinces are involved in the dialogues when it comes to optimising business practices or adapting regulations. A coalition based on mutual respect is the only way to make the public sector aware of the needs of entrepreneurs.

This raises the issue of trust. To what extent have relations changed over the years?

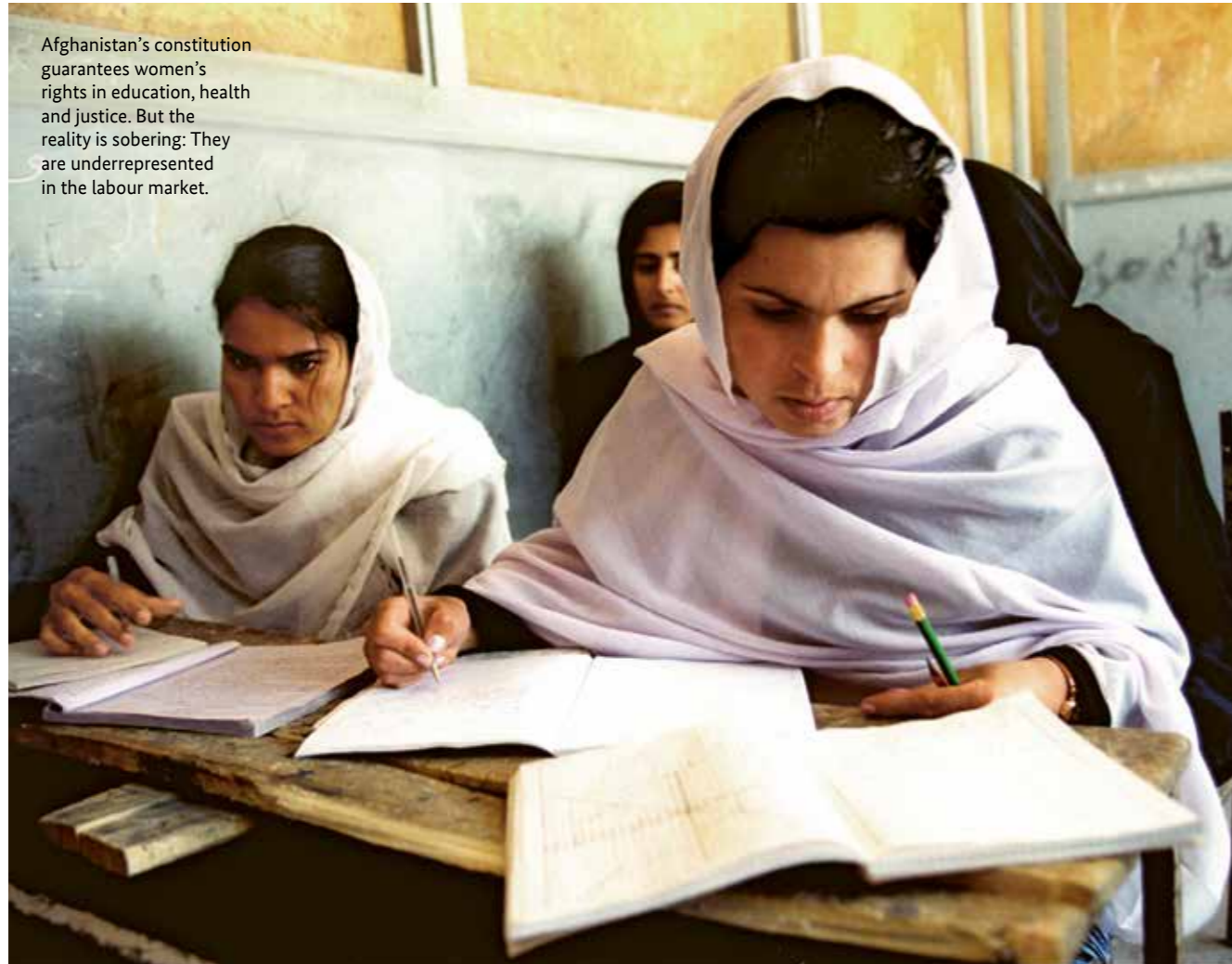
Jalal: If you mean trust between SEDEP and partners, I would say that everything is ok. If you refer to the public and private sector, I am hesitating. Experience shows that trust can also be created when challenges are resolved in a dialogue.

Aimal: I would also like to mention the critical security situation which has an impact on our construction projects. You know that we lost Kunduz to the Taliban in 2015. As long as we were able to visit the provinces, we checked progress ourselves. Nowadays, our partners are responsible for parts of the project documentation, surveys, drawings or calculations. Five years ago, this would have been impossible.

The question remains, why?

Primarily because it took so long to build up the required capacities. In addition, guidelines for remote management had to be elaborated and implemented, which apply to communication with employees. For a good two years now, we have been observing a new dynamic: Our partners are working with more meticulousness because by now they have realised that their activities are in the interest of all Afghan people. ■

Overcoming social barriers



Afghanistan's constitution guarantees women's rights in education, health and justice. But the reality is sobering: They are underrepresented in the labour market.

© Karen Robinson/VISUM

SINCE 2015 AFGHANISTAN has reported positive developments with regard to women's participation in politics, the economy and decision-making processes. At that time, the Afghan Foreign Ministry adopted the "National Action Plan Women, Peace and Security". It aims to assert the rights of women guaranteed in the constitution and to combat gender-specific violence. Today, 68 female representatives out of 244 delegates contribute to the country's social progress in the Afghan House of Commons. For example, the women politicians have helped to improve access to social services such as health and justice or to actively address issues such as corruption. In spite of this success, discrimination and social barriers continue to exist. Regularly, the country is at the bottom of the United Nations Gender Inequality Index.

DRIVING FORCE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE "Women are simply structurally disadvantaged in terms of their development potential," according to Rahim Rahimi, responsible for gender issues within SEDEP. They look after the household and do the field work, but men dispose of the income. Gender justice therefore plays a central role in the programme: It relies particularly on women's innovation potential to further develop activities in the value chains. "We promote gender equality through measures that aim at empowering women," Rahimi continues. These activities are anchored in the Gender Action Plan. They are implemented by the SEDEP team in cooperation with the Department of Women Affairs and the Women Chamber of Industry and Commerce, among others. Together they are responsible for the results of management seminars or actions.

WOMEN SUPPORT WOMEN One example: In the summer of 2019, successful female entrepreneurs discussed with young female colleagues in Balkh and Badakhshan on how they could address cultural conflicts in business development or can get access to resources and services. The workshop offered 130 participants a platform for action-oriented exchange of experience. Women thus supported women in overcoming social barriers. The impact of



Sahaba Qadiry runs her beauty salon – she has left behind the social hurdles she encountered during its founding.

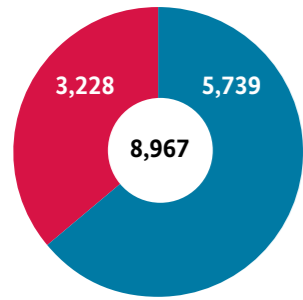
« Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. »

Article 22 of the Constitution of Afghanistan

such and similar activities can be expressed in figures. For example, one fifth of the businesses advised by SEDEP are run by women. They employ 1,199 women and the turnover of their companies has increased by five per cent per year.

MEASURABLE AND QUANTIFIABLE SUCCESS More than a quarter of the agricultural enterprises are run by women. They gave work to 2,531 women and their turnover rose by 36 per cent in five years. "Ultimately, women provide income opportunities for women," Rahimi stresses. At the same time, their standard of living rises, they gain access to land, housing, education and health, and take part in political life. In other words: They contribute to social justice and development in their home country. ■

Employment promotion and improved incomes



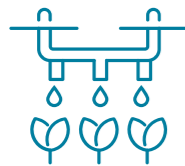
Thanks to the SEDEP support, medium, small and micro enterprises have created 8,967 permanent jobs to date – 36 per cent of which are held by women. In addition, between 11,000 and 16,000 seasonal jobs are created every year. Finally, farms increased their production, which improved incomes by almost double. 27 per cent of these businesses are run by women.

■ Men ■ Women

Applying innovations

At present, **15,400** out of a total of **23,000** people to whom SEDEP has conveyed innovations use the new knowledge in their everyday work.

On average, one infrastructure project every month



63,449
families benefited from the improved irrigation of cultivated areas

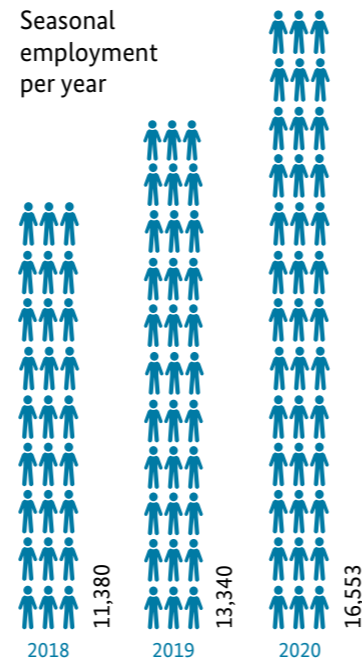


967
families were provided with access to storage facilities for their products



468
families were given access to facilities for further processing

Seasonal employment per year

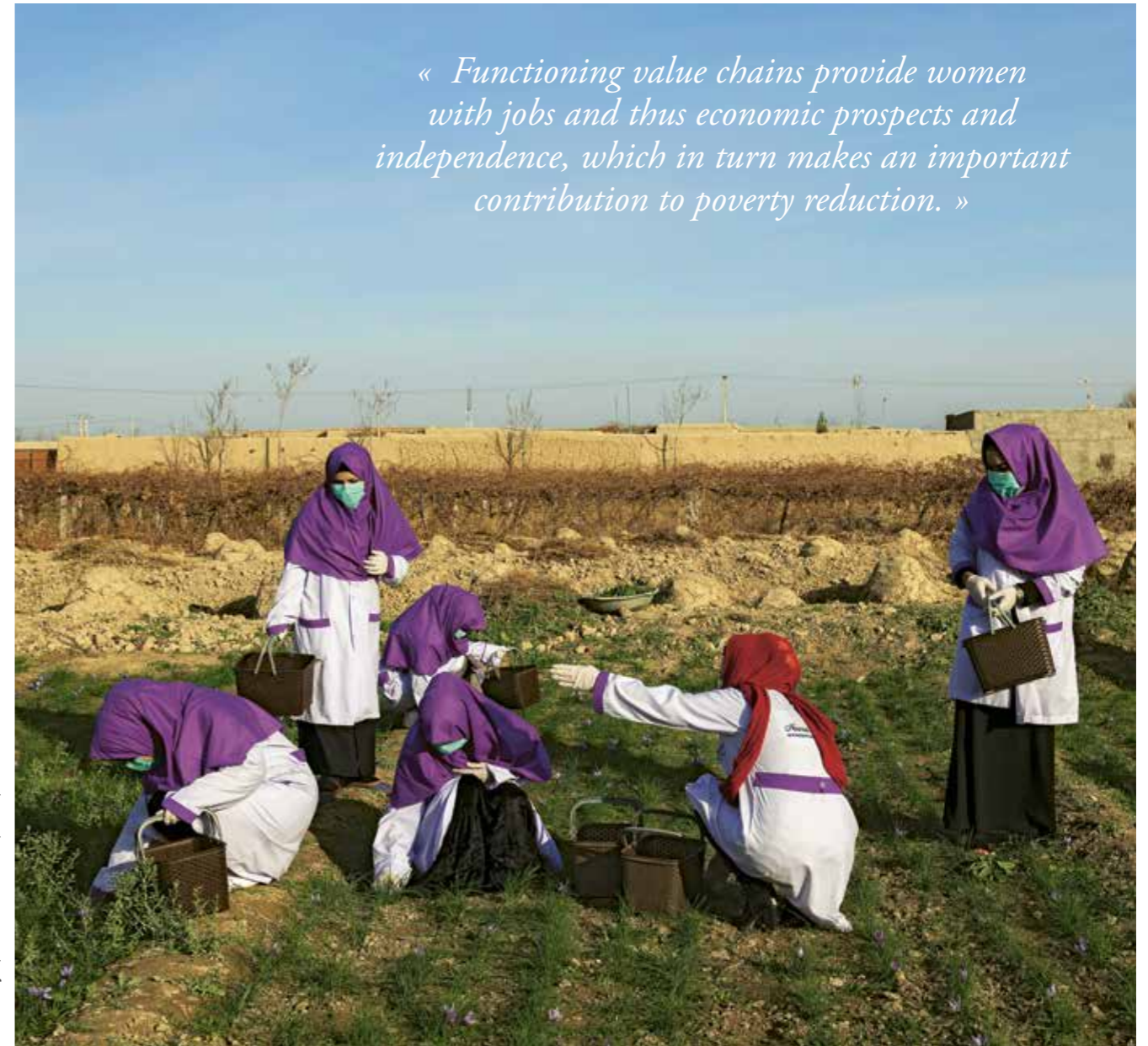


Public-Private Dialogues

are expected to remove obstacles in the value chains in cooperation with public and private sector actors.

Whether in Balkh, Takhar, Kunduz or Samangan, Baghlan and Badakhshan – **28 of these dialogues** have taken place so far. They resulted in the solution of **six problems** such as the City Entry Tax.

All Icons: © Noun Project



« Functioning value chains provide women with jobs and thus economic prospects and independence, which in turn makes an important contribution to poverty reduction. »

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